



## An Abundance of Feelings



In a perfect world, children would feel a range of emotions—excitement, anger, happiness, disappointment, envy, frustration, hurt—and know how to effectively deal with them. In reality, they feel things intensely but often can't identify or label the emotion, much less respond to it in an acceptable way. That's where parents and other caregivers come in.

Here are some ways to help children be aware of, identify, and exhibit or share their feelings with others.

**Show respect for children's feelings.** The goal is not to drive feelings underground but to acknowledge that children's feelings are important. You can validate feelings by saying things such as, "I know you want to stay outside, but it's time for dinner. You can play outside another time."

**Talk about feelings.** It's difficult to talk about something if you don't have a name for it. Label the feeling: "You look excited because you're going to Grandma's house" or "Learning to tie shoestrings can be pretty frustrating." Children soon learn to identify their own feelings. It's helpful if your child can say, "Mom, Kevin made me mad when he tore my picture."

**Respond to nonverbal forms of communication.** Babies coo, cry, and babble. They obviously can't tell us what they're feeling, but they're communicating plenty and probably effectively! A toddler soon learns that hitting isn't acceptable, even if he's very angry or very frustrated. But appropriate responses to this behavior are how he learns.

**Share some of your own experiences.** As children develop, they like to know that you experienced the same emotions and you survived! "When I was seven, I felt left out when my friends rode away on their bikes without me."

**Be realistic about your expectations.** Most adults find it challenging at times to keep their own emotions in check. Give kids a break once in a while if an outburst occurs such as crying or yelling. They're still practicing—they're not perfect.

**Come up with solutions together.** "You hurt your toe when you kicked the chair. Can you think of a better way to express your anger?"

**Improvise.** When you don't know how to help, sometimes a good, warm hug goes a long way. If your child is feeling lonely, out of control, or just sad, offer a comforting hug or a lap to sit on until the good feelings start to return.

### Activities:

#### Play a Feelings Game

##### *How do you feel when:*

- You draw a picture for your brother?
- Your balloon bursts?
- Your teacher gives you a hug?
- You find a lost dog?
- Your best friend gets mad at you?

#### Read a Book about Feelings

##### *Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods*

*That Make My Day*, by Jamie Lee Curtis, illustrated by Laura Cornell

This exceptional book helps kids explore their ever-changing moods—from silly to cranky, excited to sad. The heroine understands feelings well. One moment, she's excited about starting a club and selling lemonade; the next, she's sad, confused, or lonely. The verse is lively and touching, the illustrations whimsical. At the back of the book is a cardboard dial-an-expression face that lets children show how they're feeling.

# PERSONAL PARENTING



## Downtime for Everyone

Even after children outgrow naps, they can benefit from quiet time, and so can you! Get in the habit of creating a downtime when everyone in the family can do quiet things individually. Let children read books, color, or relax and listen to music in their own space. You can take advantage of this time to call a friend, flip through a magazine, or just take a break from routines. Learning to quiet down in a calm, hushed environment revitalizes everyone for the day and evening to come.

## Interactive Activities with Books

- \* Read *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams. Invite your child to play with a toy that's been neglected for a while.
- \* Read *I Love You the Purplest* by Barbara M. Jooisse. Play the game "I Love You More Than ..." by making up an answer such as "all the water in the ocean."
- \* Read *Corduroy* by Don Freeman. Count and sort stuffed animals.



## Make Apple Smiles

It's fast and easy to make this tasty treat. Cut a red apple into half-inch wedges. Spread the top of one wedge with peanut or almond butter. Place a few mini marshmallows on top of the peanut butter for the teeth. Spread another apple wedge with peanut or almond butter to form the upper lip and place it on top. This treat is yummy and looks like a toothy smile!



## Babbling Is Universal

The sweet sounds of a baby babbling are heard around the world. There are four basic sound patterns—"ba ba," "ma ma," "da da," and "wa wa"—that parents hear as their children approach their seventh and eighth months. These universal first sounds are a step toward speaking first words.

## Pancake Breakfast

As the days get shorter and the mornings darker, why not brighten things up with a special breakfast. Since time is also short, you can prepare these simple and nutritious pancakes. To keep things less rushed, prepare these simple and nutritious pancakes the night before. All you have to do the next morning is pop them in the toaster for a quick warm-up. Serve with applesauce, maple syrup or fruit.

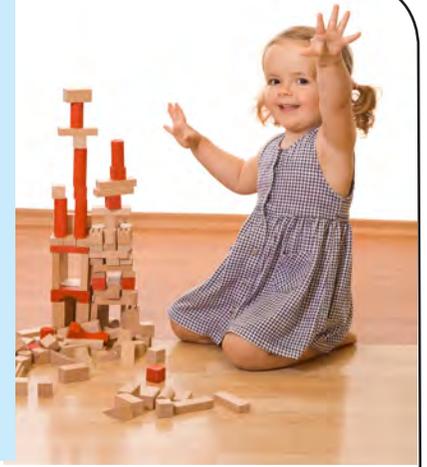
- 1 cup quick-cooking oats
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 Tbsp. sugar
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 1/2 cups milk
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- Combine the oats, flour, sugar, baking powder and salt in a mixing bowl. Make a well in the center. In a small bowl, combine the eggs, milk, oil, and lemon juice. Pour into the well and stir just until moistened. Pour the batter by 1/4 cupfuls onto a lightly greased hot griddle.
- Flip when bubbles form on top of the pancakes. Cook until the second side is golden brown. Makes 12 pancakes.



# Choosing the Best Toys for Ages and Stages of Development

**P**arents know that children are ingenious when they want to amuse themselves. They turn pots and pans into musical instruments and boxes into castles and caves. And dirt, always close by, provides a canvas for writing and a medium for sculpting. In fact, dirt made it onto the top-5 best toys list published by the high-tech magazine *Wired*; the other four were sticks, boxes, string,

*So what are the best toys? There are many guidelines, but one of the most helpful is to keep the age and stage of development of your child in mind.*



## Infants (birth–12 months)

Developmental changes occur rapidly during the first year of life. Younger infants respond to sights, sounds, and textures. Older infants develop grasping abilities as they learn to sit up and crawl.

- \* Rattles
- \* Grasping toys (pop-beads, teethingers)
- \* Rhythm instruments, recorded music
- \* Unbreakable mirrors
- \* Cloth, plastic, or board picture books
- \* Stuffed animals and soft-bodied dolls
- \* Activity boxes and nesting cups
- \* Simple cars and trucks \* Picture books

## Toddlers (ages 1–2)

Increasing mobility and language skills, a love of exploring, and a desire for independence moves this age child to enjoy toys that build mastery.

- \* Sand and water play
- \* Dolls and accessories
- \* Unit and large plastic blocks
- \* Push and pull toys
- \* Simple puzzles
- \* Art supplies
- \* Lacing and stringing toys
- \* Play dough
- \* Rhythm instruments, recorded music
- \* Nesting cups \* Picture books

## Preschool and Kindergarten (ages 3–5)

With a growing capacity for social interaction, language ability, and physical skills, this age child participates in more complex dramatic play and some organized group activities. Fantasy play is at its height.

- \* Dress-up clothes
- \* Play scenes
- \* Transportation toys
- \* Sand and water
- \* Construction materials (blocks and LEGOs)
- \* Puzzles and pegboards
- \* Dolls with clothes and accessories
- \* Picture books
- \* Pattern blocks and beads for stringing
- \* Games (dominoes, cards, and board games based on chance)
- \* Wagons and doll carriages
- \* Art and craft supplies
- \* Musical instruments and recorded music
- \* Balls and sports equipment
- \* Ride-on toys
- \* Outdoor gym equipment

## School-age (ages 6–8)

This age child is better able to cooperate with peers and obey simple rules in games. A variety of materials are needed for building literacy, mathematical and spatial understanding, nature and science concepts, and creative expression in art and music.

- \* Role-playing materials (costumes and props)
- \* Dolls and action figures
- \* Puppets
- \* Storybooks for reading aloud, based on the child's interests
- \* Construction materials (interlocking pieces for building detailed models)
- \* Art and craft supplies
- \* Musical instruments and recorded music
- \* Pattern-making materials (mosaic tiles, geometric puzzles)
- \* Balls and sports equipment
- \* Complex outdoor and gym equipment
- \* Jigsaw puzzles, including from five to 100 pieces